

Customer-to-Customer Interaction (CCI) in Tourism: a customer diversity perspective

Richard Nicholls

Customer Interactions Research Group, University of Worcester, UK

r.nicholls@worc.ac.uk

Selected themes in CCI research

- Evidence of CCI
- Types of CCI
- Customer satisfaction implications of CCI
- Blame attribution
- Management of CCI
- Similarity and dissimilarity of customers

CCI and similarity

- An established theme in CCI research:
- Compatibility management roots:
 - “instances of incompatibility can usually be traced to some form of customer heterogeneity” (Martin and Pranter, 1989)
- Many authors see **limiting customer diversity** as key to managing CCI
 - How realistic is this?
 - Is customer similarity important?

Themes

1. A range of **types of tourist diversity** influence CCI (negatively?)
2. Some **tourism contexts** lessen the impact of social diversity
3. **Tourist dissimilarity** is portrayed as a source of **value added** in some contexts

Customer dissimilarity dimensions

Theme	Study	Findings
Age	Grove & Fisk (1997)	Noted age-difference related CCI incidents (NCCI & PCCI)
	Thakor et al. (2008)	Younger consumers preferred similar age fellow customers
National culture	Nicholls (2011)	Introduces concept of cross-cultural CCI (CC-CCI) and discusses relevant studies. Illustrates NCCI & PCCI
Dimensions	Kruse (2003)	Perceptions of female dwarfs of encounters in service settings
	Small & Harris (2012)	Identifies obesity-related tensions between air passengers
Purpose of consumption	Ekpo et al. (2015)	Case study of conferences
	Vaske et al. (2000)	Identifies leisure conflicts

Customer dissimilarity: a source of value added

- **Help-seeking** customer:
 - Seeking help from other who resemble the end-user (e.g. present buying) (McGrath & Otnes 1995)
- **Mutual help:**
 - Learning from others with different experiences e.g. MBA (Nicholls 2011)
- **Age & authenticity:**
 - Older participants may receive some pioneer kudos

Customer social diversity impact dampened

- Some tourism contexts lessen the 'everyday' **social order**:
 - adventure activity, pilgrimages, festivals
- **Communitas** ('togetherness') develops as diverse individuals share a common bond of experience
- Studies include:
 - Foster & McCabe, 2015 (adventure camps)
 - Yarnal & Kerstetter, 2005 (cruise vacations)

Contribution of study

1. Discussion of similarity and dissimilarity in tourism CCI research context
2. Identifies CCI-relevant differences between tourists
3. Explores non-traditional CCI literature

References

- Ekpo, A.E., Riley, B.K., Thomas, K.D., Yvaire, Z., Gerri, G.R.H. & Munoz, I.I. (2015). As worlds collide: The role of marketing management in customer-to-customer interactions. *Journal of Business Research*, 68, 119-126.
- Foster, C. & McCabe, S. (2015). The role of liminality in residential activity camps. *Tourist Studies*, 15(1), 46-64.
- Grove, S.J. & Fisk, R.P. (1997). The impact of other customers on service experiences: a critical incident examination of 'getting along'. *Journal of Retailing*, 73(1), 63-85.
- Kruse, R.J. (2003). Narrating intersections of gender and dwarfism in everyday spaces. *The Canadian Geographer*, 47(4), 494–508.
- McGrath, M.A. & Otnes, C. (1995). Unacquainted influencers: when strangers interact in the retail setting. *Journal of Business Research*, 32(3), 261-272.
- Martin, C.L. & Pranter, C.A. (1989). Compatibility management: customer-to-customer relationships in service environments. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 3(3), 5-15.

References (continued)

- Nicholls, R. (2011). Customer-to-customer interaction (CCI): a cross-cultural perspective. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 23(2), 209-223.
- Small, J. & Harris, C. (2012). Obesity and Tourism: Rights and Responsibilities. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 39(2), 686-707.
- Thakor, M.V., Suri, R. & Saleh, K. (2008). Effects of service setting and other consumers' age on the service perceptions of young consumers. *Journal of Retailing*, 84(2), 137-149.
- Vaske, J., Carothers, P., Donnelly, M., & Baird, B. (2000). Recreation conflict among skiers and snowboarders. *Leisure Sciences*, 22, 297-313.
- Yarnal, C. M. & Kerstetter, D. (2005). Casting Off: An Exploration of Cruise Ship Space, Group Tour Behavior, and Social Interaction. *Journal of Travel Research*, 43, 368-379.